NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

San Antonio Air Logistics Center
Office of Public Affairs
807 Buckner Drive
Kelly Air Force Base, Texas 78241-5842

Cmcl (210) 925-7951
DSN 945-7951

SA-ALC

Information about Kelly AFB is available on the Worldwide Web at: http://kellypub.kelly.af.mil/

Release No. 00-07-02
July 5, 2000

NEW TREATMENT PLANT CUTS OFF SOURCE OF KELLY CONTAMINATION

KELLY AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- In a ceremony on July 6, Major General Paul Bielowicz cut the ribbon signifying startup of the East Kelly groundwater treatment plant, activating a $4.3 million system to collect and treat contaminated groundwater along the boundaries of East Kelly.

Bielowicz, commander of the San Antonio Air Logistics Center, described the plant as a response to the commitment made when the off-base pollution was announced in 1998. At that time he said the Air Force would install cleanup systems to isolate the sources of contamination.

The East Kelly system involves ten horizontal wells and three

desired pathway. This technology has evolved in the past five years and represents a dramatic improvement, according to Pat McCullough, senior representative of the Air Force Base Conversion Agency at Kelly.

The wells tie together in a way that creates an underground “fence” -- a containment system that prevents contaminated water under the base from moving into the neighborhoods.

Altogether, the wells involve a total length of more than 14,000 feet – more than two and a half miles. The portions drawing water stretch to about a mile and a half. The system will capture and treat water at rates as high as 550 gallons per minute.

The treatment plant imitates the action of sunlight to destroy the chemicals. Energy from an ultraviolet lamp breaks apart the hydrocarbon molecules that are the contamination. Hydrogen Peroxide provides an oxygen source. The carbon collects oxygen to create carbon dioxide gas. The hydrogen atoms bind with the oxygen to form water. The result is that hazardous cleaning solvents are destroyed. Their building blocks are converted into harmless materials (carbon dioxide and water).

The new plant is operated by a computer, so that it can be monitored and controlled from other locations without any workers at the site itself. These control sites include the existing groundwater treatment plant on the main base, Bldg.306 on Kelly, and a portable terminal at the home of the AFBCA employee who will be responsible for the operation of the system.

Treated water from the plant will be released through stormwater outfall 003, which drains into Sixmile Creek and is regulated by a discharge permit. Planners are evaluating possible uses for the

higher and would have involved disposing of tremendous amounts of soil and contaminated groundwater.

The Air Force is committed by law to identify all pollution caused by Air Force activities during Kelly's 80-year history and perform the necessary cleanup actions. The long term cleanup for the East Kelly area is continuing through a process of sampling, evaluation, examining options and developing a formal cleanup proposal for the community and government agencies to review.

By quickly installing controls at the contamination source, the East Kelly system represents a departure from the normal process. The system was not mandated by the regulatory agencies, but is a voluntary project by the Air Force. McCullough said that all Air Force cleanup efforts -- both long-term plans and interim response actions -- must have the approval of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

McCullough heads the unit that took over the environmental cleanup program in December. The Air Force Base Conversion Agency will become the Air Force's agent at Kelly when the Air Logistics Center closes next summer. McCullough's staff will supervise operation of the treatment plant and its wells.

---SA-ALC---